home

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/40596609.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Multi
Fandoms:	Polar (2019), Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Extended Universe - Fandom
Relationship:	Will Graham/Duncan Vizla | Black Kaiser
Characters:	Duncan Vizla | Black Kaiser, Original Graham-Vizla Children, Original Graham-Vizla Grandchild
Additional Tags:	Apricity POV, Alternate Universe, Tattoos, Fluff, Dad Duncan, Grandpa Duncan, Agender Character
Language:	English
Series:	Part 8 of Two Loners and a Baby
Stats:	Published: 2022-07-27 Words: 4,681 Chapters: 1/1

home

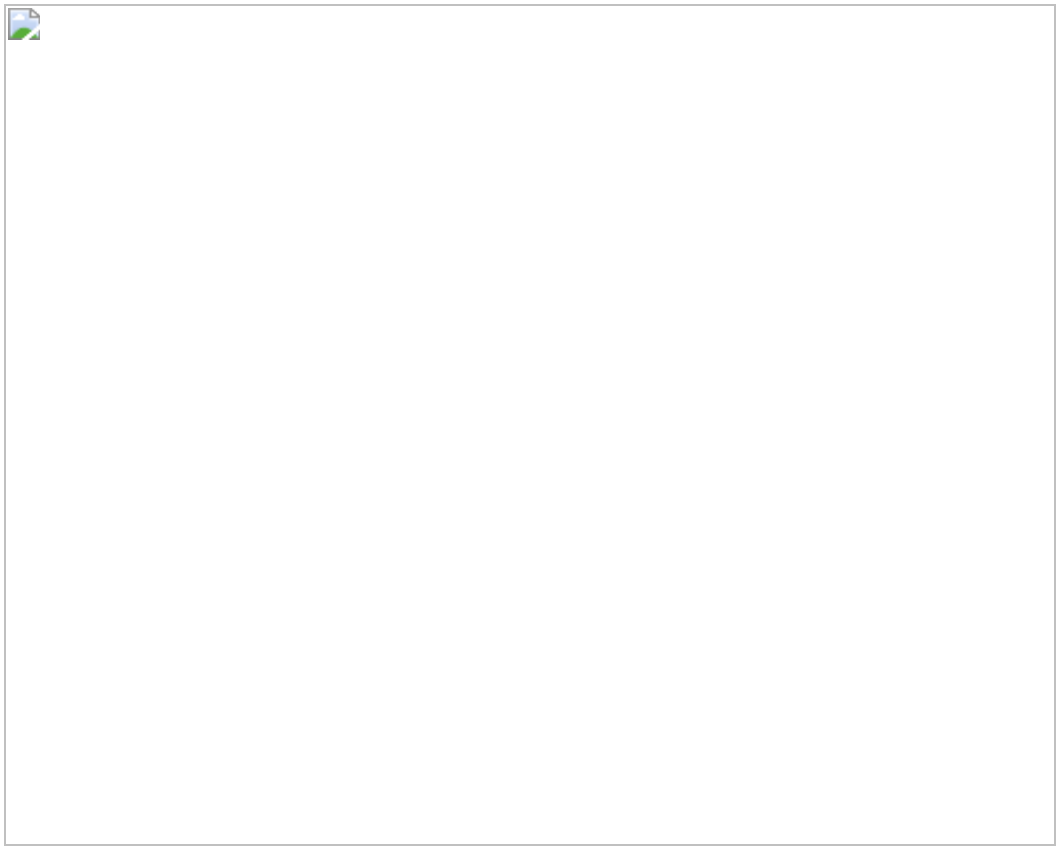
by transcryptidone

Summary

Apricity POV fic of Good Dad Duncan getting another tattoo in his collection of tattoos done by her hand. And other wholesome elements of the lives the TNTBS characters have grown into.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes



She's messing with the printer when the bell jingles. She'd wanted to print out a few different size options before he arrived. Since finishing up the other sleeve, they've got a whole 'nother blank one to start working on and a lot of possibilities to work with. When they started on the last one, it was done in bits and pieces. That was when she couldn't fathom having enough ideas to cover a large space all at once. She didn't trust herself to account for all the things she would need to – placement, layout, color, and scale. And those were just some of the things her mentor rattled off during her time as an apprentice. But she's not an apprentice anymore.

Apricity sighs as she puts her hair up in a ponytail and calls out over the buzz and the whir of the printer, *"bug!"*

Nothing. No sounds of things being set aside, no shoes shuffling against the creaky wood floorboards, no acknowledgement in the slightest. Even MJ manages better than that and she's only ten years old.

She sighs and tries again: *"bug!"*

"I'm coming!" they call out and Apricity knows from experience that the tone is only so carefree because they believe there's a customer hovering by the register. Otherwise, they would have been snarkier. Apricity smirks as she turns to look at her little sibling with their

short cut, curly hair that's a darker, ashier shade of brown. The curls bounce as they pick up their pace and practically throw themself into his arms, shouting, *"Daddy!"*

"Hello, June bug," he rasps, hugging them back tight.

Though bug is dressed comfortably in short sleeves and overalls, Dad wears his sturdy winter coat. Apricity isn't even sure he needs it. He has never seemed to get cold, no matter how much it snowed, no matter how windy, no matter if the power went out and the generator failed. He'd light a fire and find a way to fix it in no time. And barely shiver all the while.

Apricity's little sibling – the wild middle child themself – gives their dad another squeeze while standing on their tippy toes. When they finally let him go and rock back on the thick soles of their black boots, they smile so big it scrunches their freckled nose. That big, bright smile turns into a smirk in the blink of an eye and they whip their head around to direct that smirk right at her as they taunt, "Miss Priss didn't tell me you were coming in today."

"Yes, I did," Apricity says with a scoff, recalling exactly when and where she told them that Dad had another appointment. She told them to show up on time – which they never do – and they'd barely looked up from their book to nod and hum. They might have only paid attention if she'd said they didn't have to work at all. "You just didn't listen."

bug sighs, but carries on smirking as they concede, "I can't say that's not possible."

Dad chuckles and it's a pleasing sound. He's always been quiet, more about actions and not words. That's not to say that he's withholding or distant. There was never a time when Apricity didn't know that she could go to him. She might not always have *wanted* to, but she always *could.* Though she had to compete with her siblings for attention, she knew she really just had to ask.

"I was just getting the stencil ready," she tells him, pulling it from the printer and waving it for him to see.

It probably looks like a mess of purple, but her heart rate picks up with the hope that he'll like how it looks. He hadn't asked to see the sketch. He never does. He just shows up and lets her do her thing. That's why MJ called the tattoos smattering one of his arms his *stickers.* In truth, they might look slapped on one by one and some might be a bit worse for wear. She feels guilty sometimes for the ones with wobbly lines and the ones that healed a little strange for some reason. Dad always reminds her that she was learning.

"Want a snack, Dad?" bug asks. They have a whole stockpile in the back to sustain coworkers and clients alike.

Dad hums and shakes his head ever so slightly, not even emphatic enough to disturb the ends of his hair where they brush against the collar of his coat. "I had breakfast."

Apricity smiles and says, "Dad's no tattoo virgin."

She earns herself another chuckle – and it does feel like she earned it. She leaves him to wander as he likes while she wipes down the chair to make sure it's squeaky clean. She set it

up to sit just right for his arm to be at the best level and angle to get started on what will be a long project. It's Dad's money that paid for these chairs and all the rest of the furniture for that matter. She'd saved up to invest in her machines, but after that the rest went to the bills. But Dad always made sure she had her head above the water.

"These are new," Dad says, hand hovering over a glass slug with its glass slime trail that's sat on the shelf display amongst other blown glass sculptures of a variety of colors, textures, and shapes. Apricity doesn't think bug will ever let that slug be sold to anyone but them. The twins might as well have saved it for bug's birthday. But the twins included *Briarpatch* in the name of their business for a variety of reasons. Fair enough, hers includes her nickname: *Miss Priss*.

"Bri and Eira did another of their drops," Apricity tells him, though she's probably just reminding him. "We have the honor of hosting some *exclusive* pieces."

Dad's eyes scan the bowl made of glass vines with thorns. In the middle sits the twin's business card and though he has at least five in his pocket ready to give out, he seems tempted to let his hand hover over that little card in the nest. Apricity knows without him having to say it that he wishes the twins had stayed home a little longer. But Apricity has also known since she moved to a bigger city that the twins were never going to be content in Montana.

She hopes Dad is reassured by the knowledge that his kids weren't running away from home. Not at all. He's never said he thought otherwise, at least not to her. He's not withdrawn, but there are some things that are saved for one's spouse. Or, at least, that's what it has seemed like from afar. She wouldn't know from experience.

Dad pulls his hands away from the glass art on display and moseys around the counter with the sort of ease that only her regulars have. She already knows he's of age and he proofread her consent form before he passed them along to the lawyer for another once over. She was lucky that she had parents who knew a thing or two about small businesses. She's been lucky to learn from their precedent in more ways than one.

He takes his jacket off and lays it on a chair nearby and unbuttons the shirt he always wears for tattoo sessions. He's not usually the button-up type but a button up can make things a little easier when wrapped up in plastic and sore as hell. They both know that – Juni too, probably the twins as well soon enough. Z's backpiece was what convinced Apricity to get into tattooing in the first place. She can remember them coming home half wrapped in plastic and hissing through their teeth as Dad helped apply the ointment the first time while the skin was still raw. But she also remembered how striking the ink looked and the way all that pain went into something beautiful. When she'd needed to believe that was possible, she saw a reminder of it in front of her eyes.

She lines up the bigger stencil from Dad's shoulder to his elbow and then takes a step back to get a look at how it sits. She squints her eyes and tilts her head to make sure the twists and turns in the lines look intentional and not *askew*. There's a huge mirror a few steps away and Dad moves closer to get a look for himself. The stencil isn't everything the final product will be so there are surprises hidden up her sleeve.

But she's still hopeful he can see enough to get the gist and she asks, "Like it?"

Dad nods, turns away from the mirror, and looks at her instead as he remarks, "Of course."

"No, not *'of course,'"* she says with a scoff and a roll of her eyes. She gestures at him to take his seat and gives him the same sort of playfully stern look she'd give MJ as she insists, "What do you think?"

"It's perfect," he says as he settles into the seat, the plastic groaning just a little quieter than he does. He rests his elbow just where he should because he already knows how it goes. His smile fights against the frown framed by his mustache as he rumbles, *"Of course."*

"The snark!" she exclaims with a laugh. She takes her seat on her stool and puts on her black gloves before picking up her machine and testing the pedal. The buzz of the machine has become like white noise to her ears. She just raises her voice a little louder and teases, "Whoever says we get it from Z, doesn't know the half of it."

Dad huffs a laugh, just one and kept contained to not jostle his arm too much — not that he's one for a lot of gesticulating. There are some clients who have a hard time sitting still, whether because they get caught up in the chatter, they're squirmy, or they flinch away from the pain. Naturally, Dad sits as solid as he would in his chair at home and as casual as he would be sipping a glass of whiskey. He was just the same way with the tattoos spread across his other arm, but today's the day when it will really count. The other tattoos took a couple hours max, most of them less than that.

"Where are we going to put the new one?" she asks as she pulls another line. She nods towards his other arm so he'll catch her meaning.

He turns his head slightly to scan his eyes along the images that already decorate his skin and have been healed for a good long while. Up by his shoulder is a June bug drawn by bug themself and might represent humble beginnings for both his eldest children. The drawing is much more simplistic than bug does now and the same can be said for the tattoo. They've both gotten a lot more practice since then.

The pair of snowflakes on his bicep were for the twins of course and had to be identical. Whatever mistake she made, she had to fix and adjust the other one to match. She went back and forth between the two so many times she almost felt like her eyes were going to cross. But the twins were so happy to see the tattoo and didn't see any of the mistakes at all.

Just below the bend of his elbow is a cluster of Montana's state flower, her favorite. That had been when she was practicing color. She'd meant it to go in a gradient from bright yellow to vibrant pink at the ends of the petals. It took a couple times to get it the way she intended but it felt so good when she figured it out.

As Dad's forearm twists, the flowers all but disappear. He flexes his fingers and suggests, "Back of my hand?"

"Fun," she says, leaning back to get more ink. She keeps her chin tipped low as she wipes the skin of his arm but she knows he still sees her smirk and hears her tone as she oh-so-

innocently asks, “Any hints for your artist? Might help with the design.”

Dad hums and replies, “You know the general theme.”

She does indeed. Apricity. Juniper. Brina and Eira. Her parents kept up a theme but weren’t *too* obvious about it. Unfortunately, it’s not the easiest concept to tattoo. Brina and Eira had been particularly tough considering frost and snow tattooed might look like a lot of *nothing.* The snowflakes had felt a bit like a cop out. She has to remind herself that no one else feels that way.

“What are we talking about?” bug asks, clomping back into the room with those big boots of theirs. They munch on a handful of the cheese crackers they keep in the back and take a swig from a can of sparkling water. Before there’s any chance to answer their question, the phone rings and they drop into the desk chair, swinging around to pick up the phone and cheerily parrot, *“Miss Priss’ Tattoo Extravaganza, how may I help you, please?”*

Apricity scoffs under her breath and bug’s voice joins the buzz of the machine as background noise. As much as they might deviate from the script, they know the basics — the shop hours, the status of her books, and how she likes rescheduling done, for example. They’ve been working for her since they dropped out of college and, no matter how late they show up or how forgetful they might be sometimes, it has turned out for the best – at least that’s what Apricity thinks. She understands as well as anyone that college isn’t everyone’s path. And even if bug felt some pressure to succeed in college and do the things their parents never got to, it doesn’t make sense to do something miserable just for the sake of doing it. It seems they all learn that in their own way. Though maybe the twins will get to skip the lesson because they already learned it watching their older siblings…

Pulling line after line, Apricity gets into a rhythm. Tattooing has become an almost meditative process. She can keep up conversations with the best of them. She experienced from a young age how to talk shop and make charming small talk. Her earliest memory might be sitting behind the counter at a little family store. So, when clients need to talk to distract from the pain, she can find something to say about anything. But when conversation falters, she doesn’t mind that either. Not anymore. When she was younger, she might have associated the silence with too many thoughts that she’d rather not think about. Now, she hardly feels like she has time to think her own thoughts.

Her goal for today’s session is to just get the foundations finished and save the finer detail and shading for another day — or *days*. Dad sits better than anyone else she’s ever met but it would be too much for *anyone* to do in one sitting. It’s not all just about the ability to sit stone-faced and muscle through. The last thing she’d want would be for her dad to be put through senseless torture. Maybe Dad still hasn’t fully learned when to — and perhaps more importantly when not to — try to muscle through the pain. She might have thought that lesson was what led to early retirement. But his body gives a suppressed jolt when she puts needle to skin and she can feel him vibrate under her fingers just as much as she can feel the controlled shake and shutter of the machine.

She eases her foot off the pedal and sets aside her machine, picking up a stack of nice, clean paper towels and wiping away the excess ink. She tips her head to appreciate the progress. She’s managed to get in a fair bit of the outline from his shoulder winding down his arm.

She's pulled out of her appreciation of all her hard work when the drag of the paper towel might make the black outlines of evergreen trees shake as if the trunks are quaking. Her eyes flick up to see the very, *very* subtle way Dad shows his flinch in the scrunch of his nose.

"Want a break?" she asks, looking at the clock and exhaling sharply at the realization that four hours have gone by. As she rolls her neck, she can feel it every minute of it in the tensed muscle.

Dad's mustache twitches as his fingers open and close in a fist as he states, "I'm fine."

Apricity sighs, peeling off her gloves and touching her hand to his unscathed forearm gently. She keeps her tone just as gentle as she tells him, "You're trembling."

"Snack, stat!" bug declares, practically launching themself out of their chair.

The sudden energy startles her – and Dad too – and her laugh lets out a bit of tension as her body jolts. She brushes back the curl of hair that fell out of her ponytail and tucks it back in underneath the rest of her hair that's still managed to remain contained. She clicks her tongue and remarks, "A snack break doesn't sound half-bad."

"Not much longer until school is out," Dad says, not like he's assuming she forgot, but like a simple fact. Like that should explain everything.

"bug can pick up MJ," she tells him as bug themself comes running back in the room with a mason jar containing a fair bit of the latest cold brew they're testing out. The grounds are great for their compost, so they've made a project of it. They practically force Dad to take the jar and set a box of MJ's girl scout cookies on his lap just to sweeten the pairing.

"Oh, yeah, definitely! I'd be happy to get the little tyke," bug says, smiling so sweetly that their nose scrunches and eyes squint closed. When they look at her though, their eyes squint in an expression a bit more like confusion, wrinkled brow and all, as they ask, "Did MJ know Dad was coming? Was I the only one out of the loop?"

Apricity gives her little sibling a look that she could only really describe as an *isn't-it-obvious face.* She reminds them plainly, "MJ sees Dad all the time."

"True," bug concedes easily with a nod and a simple smile. They gesture towards her with a swoop of their hand and they suggest, "We should all have dinner sometime. When you don't have a tattoo in the evening."

Apricity raises her brow and questions, "And when is that going to happen?"

They give it some thought and click their tongue before determining, "Not for a while."

It's Dad's chuckle that makes his two oldest children laugh the hardest. bug sits back in their chair behind the front desk and Apricity rises from her seat. She takes the box of cookies and picks one out from the crinkly plastic then tells her father the same sort of tone as when she used to get told: "Drink your coffee and give bug your review for their research."

Dad nods his hand and lifts the rim of the jar to his lips. Apricity puts her cookie between her teeth and gives her little sibling a wink as he takes a sip. While bug might wait in anticipation for Dad's verdict, Apricity carries on to the back, grabbing a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from the pocket of her leather jacket hanging by the backdoor. She takes just one step outside and flicks her thumb a few times to try to get the lighter to start.

The lighter clicks and clicks with flickerings of flame that don't quite catch. She starts to worry that there's simply no fuel left inside and she'll just have to go without until who knows when. Maybe she could stop at a gas station on the way home, but that's a while from now. Just when she might consider giving up on it, the lighter achieves an actual flame that doesn't disappear as soon as she moves it closer to the end of the cigarette perched between her lips. She breathes in deep, pulling the smoke in, and breathing out some of the tension that's gotten wound up without her even fully noticing. She just feels the rush of relief when it's gone.

"You shouldn't smoke," Dad says, from behind her and over her shoulder. "Not good for you."

Apricity blows out a bit more smoke before turning around and quirking one eyebrow as she remarks, "Pot and kettle."

"I quit," Dad says simply, as he buttons a few more buttons on the shirt he's slipped back on for the moment.

She laughs and replies without a doubt, "No, you didn't."

Dad hums. "I couldn't lie to you."

"You're right," she remarks, "You can't."

Dad's lips ripple with a suppressed smile and she flips open the box to offer him another of her cigarettes. But he has his own pack in his pocket and the engraved zippo he was given for his first Father's Day as a grandpa. He's been a better example of a father than MJ ever had with her actual dad. Apricity tries to breathe out the bit of tightness that thought still brings to her chest from time to time.

"How's Z?" she asks him. "Feeling okay?"

Apricity doesn't get to see Z nearly as often now that she lives an hour's drive away. Her business is better off for it and the schools are better here, but that doesn't mean she doesn't miss home. Sometimes she still wishes she could wake up in the morning to a simple breakfast in her parents' house seemingly built on bedrock. But missing it doesn't hamper the soft smile that arises thinking of her parents in that house as cozy and comfy as she remembers and preparing to welcome a new bundle of joy into their empty nest.

Dad nods slightly as he pulls a drag from his cigarette, then breathes out a steady cloud. "Feeling better than okay, actually," he rasps at the tail end of the smoke. "They missed it."

"Sometimes I think I might miss it too," she confesses.

Growing up with three siblings wasn't without its troubles, but it also always meant there was someone to talk to, someone who might be interested in whatever she was excited about at the moment. Someone to talk to when she wasn't sure she was brave enough to talk to their parents. When she needed to tell her parents that she was pregnant at just fifteen, that's when she needed to have her siblings most — bug, in particular. They'd just been a little kid and didn't really seem to process what she'd told them, but even if they hadn't had any advice of use, she still felt less alone. She would have liked to give MJ that too.

"Dating anyone?" Dad asks as another cloud of smoke passes from his lips.

Apricity takes in a drag of smoke and holds it with the unsettled feelings bubbling in her chest. She sighs and remarks, "We can't all be as lucky as you."

He hums and nods as he brings his cigarette near his lips. Before he takes another pull, he agrees, "We were lucky."

Growing up, her parents' relationship always seemed like a sort of fairytale, like love at first sight and soulmates and warriors who had each other's back combined. No matter how much they tried to introduce some balance, no matter how many times they reminded her that nothing is that easy, there was a part of her that refused to believe them. It was only after the fact that she understood the cold, hard facts about children of teen parents and the likelihood that they'll become teen parents themselves.

"Every pot has its lid," Dad declares knowingly.

He'd always made it clear that she and MJ would be just fine whether MJ's dad stuck around or not. And Dad wasn't surprised when he didn't. Apricity had held out hope that she'd have what her parents had, that she might be so lucky too. When they'd broken up, she wasn't sure if she was sad to lose him or just sad to lose the dream.

But if she'd stayed with him, she wouldn't be tattooing and definitely wouldn't have her own shop. And Dad drives two hours round trip every day to make sure someone picks up MJ from school on time and does her homework with her until Apricity is done tattooing for the day. When she comes back home to the apartment, there's usually dinner waiting for her. Maybe practice makes perfect, because neither she nor Dad have much cooking skill, but MJ seems determined to become a miniature chef.

"Ready to get back to it?" she asks, dropping her cigarette to the ground and smothering what's left of the flame under the toe of her boot.

"Ready when you are," he answers, as he does just the same.

They go back inside and Dad slips off his shirt again as she dons another pair of gloves. The coffee and the sugar seemed to have helped to replenish his tolerance a bit. When she resumes where she left off, he doesn't flinch or tremble. He keeps his eye on the clock and sits still, reminding bug when it's time to leave and pick up MJ and giving a slight wave of an arm adorned with tributes to his kids on their way out the door. Apricity feels steadier too, reenergized to put her all into a sleeve devoted to the winding roads and woods that bring them to their home on the edge of a lake tucked between mountains.

The drive is something she knows so well, she can picture it if she closes her eyes. She used that familiarity as she drew. She knows the turn she took a little too fast when she'd just gotten her license and remembers the way she felt her heart in her throat with a foreboding feeling of what could have gone wrong. There's a bridge across a creek that's only one car wide and requires a bit of backroad courtesy. Nearby, the fork in the road splits off towards where her grandpa's house sits against the mountainside. She tried to capture as many details as she could, showing this winding path as much dedication as her Dad always has.

"Papa!"

MJ charges in through the front door and past the front desk, backpack bouncing against her back. MJ has her dad's nose and his eyes but Z's hair has carried on from grandparent to parent to child. The curls are a wild mess that Dad would have likely braided if he had both hands free. But MJ knows better than to be rough when her mom is tattooing. She has been taught what she needs to know to be careful and considerate, so she leaves plenty of space to avoid bumping into Apricity's elbow and comes around to stand at her Papa's other side.

"How was school?" Dad asks as his hands pat down her wild curls and gently works through some of the knots between his fingers.

As her daughter dives into a telling of her school day, Apricity thinks of the moment when she held her baby for the first time. She'd looked at the precious, tiny thing and named the little one after a very special woman in her life. *Molly.* But when Dad held his grandchild, he'd teared up and rasped through a half-formed dad joke about *Molly Junior.* They've called her MJ ever since and it has only seemed to suit her more and more as she's grown.

It might not be the stuff of fairytales, but Apricity still winds up feeling pretty darn lucky.

End Notes

I hope you enjoyed! I wrote a whole book of Apricity POV. Don't know that it will ever get published, but this was the bit of fic that kicked off the idea. 😊

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!